



Newsletter

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE OF GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2023



Otar Shamugia: “I congratulate all the citizens of our country!” Granting Georgia the status of a candidate for the EU member state is a historic decision. Our country continues to move forward, this is an irreversible process for full membership of the European family”

EU member states unanimously recognized Georgia’s progress. I thank everyone - the Georgian people, the Georgian government team, our international partners. My special gratitude to all the employees of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, who contributed significantly to the implementation of the reforms, which were a necessary condition for a favorable decision.

From the 27 environmental directives/regulations stipulated by the Association Agreement, legislative approximation has already been implemented with 20 legal acts, and active work is underway to approximate seven legal acts. Within the framework of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, the legislation of Georgia has already approached 130 normative acts from the 200 legal acts of the European Union.

We continue to make strides towards full membership of the European family.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21531>

United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28)

United Nations Conference of the Parties to Climate Change (COP28) is a multilateral decision-making platform on climate change issues, embracing almost all countries worldwide. More than 100,000 delegates participated in the ongoing Conference in Dubai. The Conference hosted various events, including the Leaders' Summit, Ministerial meetings, bilateral meetings, and negotiations.

Otar Shamugia participated in the Ministerial held at the initiative of Japan in Dubai.



Within the framework of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28), the Ministers of Environmental Protection and high-ranking officials from different countries worldwide participated in the meeting in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The meeting was held at the invitation of Mr. Ito Shintaro, Minister of Environment of Japan.

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, delivered remarks at the high-level meeting, where he positively assessed the cooperation between the Governments of Japan and Georgia under the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM).

"In 2022, the Governments of Georgia and Japan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand cooperation against climate change and create a joint crediting mechanism. It is planned to establish a joint committee comprising officials from both Governments. The committee will have the mandate to implement the joint crediting mechanism. Moreover, we are planning a joint committee meeting to formalize the project cycle procedures, which will allow us to conduct the first emission reduction projects in Georgia under the JCM scheme," said Mr. Shamugia.

Mr. Shamugia met with the Minister for the Environment of the Czech Republic, Mr. Petr Hladik.



"For many years, we have successfully cooperated with the Czech side, the Czech Development Agency in conducting research and developing caves in protected areas. Moreover, holding a conference and discussing critical issues within the framework of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28) will contribute to an even more dynamic development of cooperation", said Mr. Shamugia.

According to the Minister of Environmental Protection of the Czech Republic, Mr. Petr Hladik, the Czech Republic supports Georgia

on its path to European integration and expressed his readiness to cooperate with the Georgian side in fulfilling environmental protection obligations.

"We are happy with the Georgia-Czech cooperation, particularly in the framework of new protected area initiatives. Moreover, we firmly support Georgia's rapprochement with the European Union and the path it should take in the future to become part of the European Union. Although it is important to have proper legislation, share principles, and join many common goals of the European Union, however, the path that Georgia has taken in this rapprochement process is also essential, and we are happy with the achieved result," said Mr. Petr Hladik.

The Minister for the Environment of the Czech Republic, Mr. Petr Hladik, invited Mr. Shamugia to the Czech Republic to discuss issues of deepening cooperation.

During the meeting, with Mrs. Steffi Lemke, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection Mr. Otar Shamugia spoke extensively about the implemented and planned environmental projects in Georgia and thanked the Minister for supporting several important programs.



According to Mr. Shamugia, the European Commission's recommendation to award Georgia candidate status on November 8 is a significant step forward. In 2023, Georgia achieved critical success toward European integration.

"Important environmental efforts have been made this year, including the adoption of a law on Water Resources and Industrial Emissions Trading, and soon we will also discuss the law on Biodiversity Protection," said Minister Shamugia.

The parties emphasized the importance of expanding protected areas, elaborating a proper management plan, developing ecotourism, and setting up modern infrastructure, which qualitatively contributes to preserving biodiversity and attracting visitors.

Mrs. Steffi Lemke confirmed her support on the path to European integration and in implementing existing and planned initiatives. Mr. Shamugia invited his German colleague to Georgia to learn more about the unique nature of the country.

The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, participated in the Asian Development Bank event held within the framework of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28).



The event was dedicated to sustainable development in the agriculture, food, and natural resources sector.

In her remarks, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili focused on the Asian Development Bank's climate-smart irrigation development project, which aims to support the modernization of agricultural irrigation systems and institutional reforms in Georgia.

Otar Shamugia meets the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mukhtar Babayev.



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Mukhtar Babayev, discussed issues of deepening future cooperation during the official meeting, which was held in the United Arab Emirates - Dubai, within the framework of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28).

As we know, the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku, will host the Conference (COP 29) next year.

Minister Shamugia confirmed his full support to his Azerbaijani counterpart and promised to ensure the significant event for the region will be held at a high level. The parties decided to establish a Georgia-Azerbaijan joint working group to collaborate on the main initiatives of COP 29.

During the meeting, Minister Babayev emphasized the role of Georgia in the process of peace negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"The signing of the peace agreement is crucial for the entire world. Georgia has a great

role in normalizing relations, which we appreciate very much," said Mr. Mukhtar Babayev.

According to Mr. Shamugia, the relations between the top leaders of the countries play a critical role in representing the region in the international arena, noting that thanks to their efforts, the relations between our countries are deep and positive in various directions.

"There is no alternative to peace, and I am delighted that it will be strengthened throughout the region", said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

Mr. Mukhtar Babayev, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, noted that Azerbaijan has a long history of relations and cooperation with its partner country - Georgia.

"We have had a very fruitful discussion today with the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia about future cooperation in the context of the 28th and 29th Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held next year in Baku, Azerbaijan. We believe in having numerous opportunities to do more and prepare new concepts, even at the regional level. For all of us, the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) will be an excellent opportunity to show the world how our regions, Azerbaijan and Georgia are progressing towards a greener future. To transition to green technology, green agriculture, and the implementation of all the green concepts existing in the world today", said Mr. Babayev.

The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Otar Shamugia, participated in the High-level Conference of the Ministers of Environmental Protection.



Ministers of Moldova, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, and other high-ranking officials attended the meeting -held at the invitation of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, Mr. Ruslan Strilets.

According to Mr. Shamugia, the event brings together countries with shared commitments to addressing environmental and climate change challenges.

Otar Shamugia hosted the US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia, Robin L. Dunnigan



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, met Mrs. Robin L. Dunnigan, the U.S. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the successful cooperation between the two countries in the agricultural and environmental protection fields.

Minister Shamugia thanked the Ambassador and expressed his appreciation to the United States of America for supporting Georgia in rural /agricultural development and environmental protection areas.

“In recent years, we have made real progress in agricultural and environmental protection areas. With the support of our partners and friendly countries, especially the European Union and the USA, we have implemented reforms, legislative amendments, and institutional changes that have led to significant and positive results. We are waiting to receive the status of a candidate country of the European Union, following which we will intensify our efforts towards reforms and legislative convergence. We are ready to further deepen our relations with the US in agriculture and

environmental protection areas, which will help us on our way to development,” said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

The conversation touched upon the priority areas for future cooperation. The parties discussed the deepening of trade relations, the growth of Georgian wine exports, diversification of markets, food safety, and environmental protection issues.

US Ambassador Mrs. Dunnigan wished Georgia success in its European integration process and expressed readiness to support the Ministry in its efforts to align with European standards.

“ During the meeting, we spoke about increasing trade in agricultural products, which means more Georgian products in America and bringing more American products to Georgia. We also highlighted the support provided by the US for Georgian farmers to improve their production efficiency, allowing them to sell their products at a better profit margin both locally and internationally. We have a strong cooperation in the agricultural sector, and we are ready to deepen this cooperation even more”, said Mrs. Dunnigan.

The representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the US Embassy attended the meeting.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21529>

The article “History of Georgian wine - 8000 years of continuous grape vintage” was published on the CNN website



“Georgia proudly holds the title of the homeland of wine” - this is how CNN begins its story about the history and culture of Georgian wine.

On the initiative of the National Wine Agency, an article entitled “History of Georgian Wine - 8000 years of continuous grape vintage” was published on the official website of the American television company CNN.

The article presents the scientific conclusion proving that the 8,000-year history of winemaking began in the territory of Georgia.

“The landscape of Georgia, endowed with a moderate climate favorable for growing grapes, has become the homeland of more than 525 local grape varieties. The famous Alazani Valley, set against the backdrop of the Caucasus Mountains, is a haven for winemaking with a combination of well-drained, mineral-rich soils and altitude that contribute to the distinctive flavors and aromas- characteristic of Georgian wine.

Georgia is the only country where the winemaking culture dating back 8,000 years, has not been forgotten but has been further developed and strengthened. The ancient tradition of making Kvevri wine is the most common ritual of Georgian viticulture.

“The use of large conical clay pots buried in the ground allows regulating natural temperature during fermentation, giving it a unique texture and complexity,” the article says, noting that the country’s strategic location facilitated trade links with Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Excerpt from the article: “Because Kvevri has been declared a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, Georgia’s ancient winemaking practice continues to have global appeal... If you want to discover and learn more about the birthplace of winemaking- Georgia, Georgian Wine walks you through the winemaking process from soil to bottle.”

The article also highlights Georgian cuisine, wine festivals, and wine tours established in Georgia, attracting both residents and tourists.”

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21527>

Nino Tandilashvili participates in the Second Session of the UNSDCF Steering Committee



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, delivered key priorities for environmental protection and rural and agricultural development for 2024 to the Members of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

“The implementation of EU policies aimed at environmental protection and agricultural development is the most important part of our Agenda. Each step aims at developing our country and returning Georgia to the European family where it belongs. We should mention that the European Commission’s favorable recommendation on the status of a candidate for the EU membership emphasizes positive accomplishments in environmental protection and rural and agricultural development areas. The mentioned achievements are reflected in the report of the European Commission”, said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

The First Deputy Minister focused on the results of air quality improvement, measures taken to reduce emissions in the industrial and transport sectors, progress achieved in the development of the forestry sector, and water resources management, including laws on industrial emissions. Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili underlined the progress achieved in the rural and agricultural development area and the current state programs.

The First Deputy Minister thanked the partners for their support.

It is worth noting that the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Georgia 2021-2025(UNSDCF) was signed between the Government of Georgia and the UN representative office in October 2020. The Agreement is a five-year strategic action plan of the United Nations and defines the general framework of the activities of each agency of the organization in Georgia.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21509>

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture hosted the presentation of the World Bank project “Diagnosis of Plastic Pollution and Technical Assistance”



Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, attended the event.

Mr. Klaus Sattler, the World Bank’s Adviser on plastic pollution prevention, delivered a presentation of the new project, which aims to identify points of plastic pollution in the basin of the Rioni River and its tributaries (rivers: Pichora, Tekhura, Khvrila, Dzirula, Tstskenishtskali) and estimate the amount of plastic. The project also includes the analysis of legislative and policy documents, aiming to develop relevant recommendations for reducing river pollution. Consequently, the Ministry will have thorough information on pollution, on the one hand, and recommendations for applying the best European practices on the other.

“We should mention that the country has already taken effective steps to prevent plastic waste. We have technical regulations, and a national plastic waste prevention program has been developed. The new project is important to tackle the problem of plastic pollution. As you know, plastic pollution poses a threat to rivers, the ecosystem as a whole, and the health of the population. The new project will significantly help us to fulfill our goals”, said Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

The project “Diagnosis of Plastic Pollution and Technical Assistance” was initiated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. The project, funded by the World Bank, will be implemented by an International Consulting Company (COWI) and a local partner, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus).

The members of the World Bank, the International Consulting Company (COWI), the Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus), experts involved in the project, and representatives of relevant departments of the Ministry attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21507>

Otar Shamugia made opening remarks at the presentation of the project “E-Waste Collection and Management System in Georgia”



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, made opening remarks at the presentation of the project “E-Waste Collection and Management System in Georgia”.

As part of the project, Georgia will adopt the electronic waste collection system for the first time. The project includes an awareness-raising campaign as well.

Mr. Shamugia emphasized the importance of creating a modern waste management system, stating that the state prioritizes the adoption of the mentioned system, which is also envisaged by the EU Association Agreement.

“Over the years, we have been carrying out significant reforms in the environmental protection field, which encompasses several directions: the forestry sector, protected areas, ambient air quality, and water resources management. Our environmental policy and these reforms comply with the commitments made by the Association Agreement and the steps we are taking on the way to European integration.

Waste management is one of the components of environmental protection policy. We are in constant communication with the representatives of the sector to ensure the success of the reform we have initiated as part of the “Extended Producer Responsibility”. Three organizations are already operating, and more than eleven thousand

people are registered in the register. Waste management is one of the constituent parts of the economy, and the cooperation between the business sector and state agencies is crucial in this process”, said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, Chair of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament, Mrs. Maia Bitadze, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Mr. Romeo Mikautadze and Mr. Michelle Koscielski, the Director of the USAID Economic Growth Office, addressed the participants. The representatives of the local municipality, business associations, and the private sector attended the event.

The presentation also included panel discussions on the e-waste collection and management system. The parties emphasized the importance of business sector involvement, e-waste recycling, and circular economy.

“Wasteless” - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Association of Georgia organized the event. “Wasteless” is a specific waste management association that unites 10,500 companies. The organization provides collection and further management cycle of waste electrical equipment, batteries, accumulators, oils, and tires.

The event also included an exhibition of handicrafts made from electronic waste and boxes where we could place old and damaged electronic waste.

It should be mentioned that 10 large and 178 small boxes for the collection of e-waste will be installed in shopping centers and public gathering places in the coming days.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21510>

Tengiz Nasaridze makes opening remarks at the World Soil Day celebration event



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, made opening remarks at the event dedicated to World Soil Day.

“Soil protection and preservation of its useful qualities play a significant role in agriculture and environmental protection. Furthermore, discussions concerning the mentioned topic contribute to raising awareness of soil. All our actions and events in this area are aimed at protecting the soil and preserving its useful resources”, said Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze.

The Deputy Minister emphasized the importance of windbreaks and practice for introducing crop rotation, including infrastructure improvement in protecting the soil and preserving its favorable resources.

As part of World Soil Day, successful young specialists employed in the public, private, and non-governmental sectors in the agricultural field, students of educational institutions, and researchers working in the scientific and research sector were awarded the certificates of honor named after Academician Tengiz (Gizo) Urushadze, one of the founders of the Georgian School of Soil Science.

As mentioned by Giorgi Gambashidze, one of the awardees and Head of the Laboratory of Soil Fertility Research Service of the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture, receiving the award will provide an additional incentive for a winner to actively continue activities in his profession and share the acquired knowledge with others in the future.

This year, the theme of World Soil Day is “Soil and Water - Source of Life.”

It should be mentioned that World Soil Day has been commemorated worldwide since 2013 following the resolution adopted by the 68th UN General Assembly.

The representatives of the National Academies of Sciences and Agricultural Sciences, relevant services of the Ministry, the Educational Sector, the Georgian Farmers’ Association, the Biological Farming Association “Elkana”, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus), Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) attended the event organized by the Environmental Information and Education Center.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21513>

Yuri Nozadze attended the opening ceremony of the Georgia-China Xinjiang commodity exhibition



The Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Yuri Nozadze attended the opening ceremony of the Georgia-China Xinjiang 9th commodity and trade expo. Mr. Yuri Nozadze underlined the close relations between Georgia and China, wished participants success, and emphasized the role of similar events in establishing business relations.

“Georgia is the first country in the region to sign a Free Trade Agreement with China, which provides even more incentives to entrepreneurs, importers, and exporters. At the same time, it increases the attractiveness of the investment environment in Georgia. With the support of our Ministry, Georgian entrepreneurs participate in international exhibitions of all important Chinese agricultural products, wine, and alcoholic beverages, which helps them to strengthen ties. This exhibition will also help to enhance connections between the countries and facilitate successful cooperation in different areas,” Mr. Yuri Nozadze noted.

The Vice-Chairman of the Government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, Mr. Kaiser Abdukerim, and the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Zhou Qian, addressed the participants.

As mentioned, China and Georgia have strong trade and economic ties, and the bond that began on the Silk Road is now reaching new heights. Similar exhibits assist in making the most use of the potential presented by the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, including strengthening bilateral connections, which boosts our nation’s economic development and progress. Enhanced ties and collaboration between the countries will bring good results.

The representatives of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade of Xinjiang and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry attended the event.

“ Georgia-China Xinjiang Commodity Exhibition will be held on December 6-8 in the 4th and 5th pavilions of the “ExpoGeorgia” exhibition center. The exhibition showcases products produced in the Xinjiang region of China: wine and alcoholic beverages, fruit juices, dry fruits, spices, textile and light industry products, fertilizers, and others.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21515>

Otar Shamugia meets the Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Michael Francom



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, and the Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Michael Francom, discussed the trade in agricultural products, the current situation in cattle breeding, the results of the research “Evaluation of the Wheat Sector of Georgia” and the challenges in the mentioned area.

“We have had fruitful cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture over the years. We jointly implement many programs and have achieved significant results. Moreover, the support and development of the cattle breeding sector, the promotion/adoption of modern technologies and food safety standards, and the promotion of agro-food products are our priority directions in the agricultural sector.

We will undoubtedly continue to support farmers and entrepreneurs through targeted programs, and we are actively working to fulfill the obligations taken under the Association Agreement in the agricultural and environmental protection areas. After receiving the EU membership candidate status, the support of USDA and our other partners will be even more crucial,” said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

During the meeting, the Minister focused on the research “Evaluation of the Wheat Sector of Georgia” conducted by the Kansas State University (USA), with the support of the USDA, and highlighted the results of the research and the existing challenges in wheat production and sale.

The Minister emphasized the importance of using quality seed material, following the crop calendar while taking measures, and improving irrigation infrastructure to overcome challenges. Mr. Shamugia also spoke about the steps taken by the state to improve the irrigation infrastructure.

The Regional Director of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Mr. Michael Francom, stated that Georgia will take a step forward by receiving the status of a candidate for EU membership. Mr. Francom emphasized the importance of Georgia’s role in the “Transcaspien International Transport Corridor” and the country’s potential in this direction.

Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, representatives of relevant services of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and the US Department of Agriculture attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21516>

Solomon Pavliashvili runs meetings on waste management and circular economy-related issues in Belgium



Within the framework of his visit to Belgium, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, met with the Head of the Directorate General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DGA1 NEAR) of the European Commission Mr. Matthew Buske, and the Head of the Directorate General for Environmental Affairs (DGA1 ENV), Mr. Devor Pekan.

Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili summarized the reforms implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in the waste management and circular economy areas and thanked the European Union for its support.

Georgian delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, representatives of Extended Producer Responsibility organizations, including the Deputy Minister.

“The delegation comprising of private sector EPR organizations demonstrates the Georgian government’s readiness to implement green transformation and promote economic development through a circular model,” said Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili.

The high-ranking representatives of the European Commission positively assessed the progress achieved by Georgia and emphasized the achievements in the European integration process.

“The candidate status is a great responsibility for the country while also creating new opportunities. Georgia should start working towards EU membership, which requires a significant transformation of economic development and bringing it closer to the requirements of the European market and the EU’s environmental policy,” said Mr. Matthew Buske, Head of the European Commission’s Directorate General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DGA1 NEAR).

Deputy Pavliashvili, together with the members of the Georgian delegation, visited the EPR organizations and waste processing companies, where parties discussed waste management in EU countries and the adoption of the EPR and circular economy model in the country.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21518>

At the session of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, Carl Amirgulashvili was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Bureau for the third time



From November 27 to December 2, Strasbourg, France, hosted the 43rd session of the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe’s Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention).

The parties elected Mr. Carl Amirgulashvili, Head of the Biodiversity and Forestry Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, as Vice-Chairman of the Bureau for one year. Mr. Amirgulashvili assumed the position of Vice-Chairman of the Bureau for the first time in 2021.

The Berne Convention is one of the most important international treaties in the environmental protection field. Therefore, the appointment of a representative of Georgia to the mentioned position will promote active representation and positioning of our country in the structures of the Council of Europe, including the fulfillment of the obligation taken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, the adoption of the Convention in Georgia and the effective implementation of the environmental policy.

The Emerald Network was established and is being developed in Georgia over the years to ensure the implementation of the Convention.

Currently, the emerald network consists of 66 sites, while the total area comprises 1,307,501 hectares. At this stage, the management plans for the emerald network are being developed.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21511>

American Magazine Wine Enthusiast: “Merging modern technologies and ancient winemaking traditions distinguishes Georgia from the rest of the world’s wine regions and makes it a particularly attractive country”



At the initiative of the National Wine Agency, the prestigious American wine magazine “Wine Enthusiast” launched an advertising campaign for Georgian wine. Wine Enthusiast, founded in 1979, is today one of the most regarded wine magazines and online wine media platforms in the US market, with a 5 million audience.

As part of the campaign, the magazine “Wine Enthusiast” published an article titled “Get to Know Georgia, The Birthplace of Wine.” Furthermore, Georgian wine banner ads will be placed on the magazine’s website for a month.

The article “Get to Know Georgia, The Birthplace of Wine” discusses the modern wine industry, its distinctiveness, and diversity, including the 8,000-year Georgian winemaking history.

“Although “Qvevri” plays an important role in Georgian winemaking, Georgian winemakers actively use other winemaking methods. On the one hand, the “Qvevri”-pitcher, and on the other, the modern winemaking technology provides Georgian winemakers with a unique opportunity for making experiments. Therefore, the mixture of modern and traditional-historical winemaking technologies distinguishes Georgia from the rest of the world’s wine regions and makes it a particularly attractive country, the article says. <https://www.wineenthusiast.com/get-to-know-georgia-the-birthplace-of-wine/>

It is worth noting that with the support of the National Wine Agency, an active media campaign - promoting Georgian wine is being launched in the United States of America in 2023: an advertising clip for Georgian wine was prepared for the American TV company CNN, one of the most-rated television broadcasters in the USA. CBS has created an extensive story about Georgian wine “Ancient Vines”, and graphic articles were printed in various print and electronic publications (CNN, The Wall Street Journal, Men’s Journal, Imbibe, Wine-Searcher, SOMM TV, Forbes, Wine Enthusiast).

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21532>

Nino Tandilashvili meets the Delegation of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency



The First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, hosted the Delegation of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The Head of Development Cooperation of the Swedish Embassy in Georgia, the Deputy Head of Mission of the Kingdom of Sweden to Georgia, Mr. Erik Illes, and the Head of the Environmental Program of the Swedish Embassy in Georgia, Mrs. Khatuna Zaldastanishvili, attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the conversation touched upon the current projects and priority areas for future cooperation, including strengthening institutional capacities for air quality management and control and increasing public awareness. The parties planned an active cooperation with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency for the coming year.

Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili emphasized the importance of the Swedish Government's continuous support in implementing the environmental reforms in Georgia.

“As you are aware, improving air quality is one of the top priorities of the Govern-

ment of Georgia. Therefore, considering European experience, we have implemented significant reforms in several directions - the regulatory legal framework has been improved, industrial activity supervision has been tightened, and sanctions were imposed for violating environmental permit conditions, including conducting continuous self-monitoring of industrial companies. Moreover, fuel quality should comply with the Euro 5 standard, and road control of vehicle emissions is in progress. In 2015, only one automatic air monitoring station was functioning in Georgia, and now there are nine automatic and two mobile stations. To improve the ambient air quality, Georgia plans to further expand the monitoring network following the air quality monitoring network development plan, which was developed within the framework of the SIDA/UNDP project, with the active involvement of experienced European experts. With the support of the European Union and the project “Save Nature - Georgia”, it is planned to completely cover the country with monitoring stations by 2024-2025 in compliance with EU standards. We hope our collaboration will develop and yield even better results.” said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

As mentioned the activities carried out by the Government of Georgia in the environmental area were positively evaluated in the European Union report.

The program “Save the Nature - Georgia 2021-2024” has been successfully running since 2021 within the framework of the grant agreement signed by the Government of Georgia and the Government of Sweden. Within the project, with the support of the International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) of the Swedish Government, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia is carrying out several important activities.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21508>

Nino Tandilashvili meets with the Global Director of Climate Change of the UNDP

Within the framework of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-28), Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, the First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, met with Mrs. Cassie Flynn, the Global Director of Climate Change of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

During the meeting, Mrs. Tandilashvili emphasized the long-standing and successful cooperation between the Ministry and the United Nations Development Program in the environmental protection, agricultural and rural development fields.

“The support of the United Nations Development Program is essential for the successful implementation of the ongoing reforms in the European integration process of Georgia and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Georgia has made significant progress in combatting climate change: a long-term low-emission development strategy has been adopted, and we have made progress in implementing the Action Plan of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Georgia. In the future, we wish to continue close cooperation with international partners such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Green Climate Fund to adopt climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices, including introducing climate-smart approaches to the educational sector.” said Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili.

The conversation touched upon the ongoing project “Reducing the Risk of Climate-driven Disasters in Georgia” implemented by UNDP with assistance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Governments of Georgia, Switzerland, and the Kingdom of Sweden. Within the framework of the project, crucial steps have been taken to introduce an early warning system and strengthen institutional capacity.

According to the Global Director of Climate Change of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Mrs. Cassie Flynn, Georgia has carried out outstanding reforms.



“The country has a clear policy and vision, and concrete steps are being taken to put strategic documents into action. We are ready to continue supporting Georgia and cooperating with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture”, said Mrs. Cassie Flynn.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21526>

Tengiz Nasaridze participated in the Georgian Agri-tech and Agro-innovations Forum supported by the USAID Agriculture Program

Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, made opening remarks at the Georgian Agri-tech and Agro-innovations Forum.

The forum was held with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Agriculture Program.

The participants had an opportunity to receive practical advice from local and international speakers and attend panel discussions.

“The Agri-tech and Agro-innovations Forum is a good platform for farmers and stakeholders to obtain the necessary information. The event welcomes youth involvement. As you know, the active involvement of young people in the agricultural sector is crucial for field development in light of current needs”, - noted Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture.

Mr. Davit Tsitlidze, Director of the Rural Development Agency, Mrs. Luiza Namicheishvili, Director of the USAID Agriculture Program, the representatives of the Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency, international organizations, farmers, and entrepreneurs attended the event.

The event also included an exhibition of local products, agro-technologies, and agro-innovations.

The USAID Agriculture Program and the Startup Bureau organized the Agro technologies and Agro innovations Forum.



<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21535>

Nino Tandilashvili discusses programs planned in the South Caucasus region



During the meeting with the representatives of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili, discussed the implementation of the planned programs “USAID South Caucasus Regional Water Management Program” and “USAID South Caucasus Regional Tourism Program”.

The parties emphasized the importance of the programs, implementation deadlines, and the role of the participants.

“US support is crucial for the development of the sector. We carried out several significant programs and initiatives in collaboration with USAID. However, before launching new programs, firstly, we must identify our needs and which project will cover which direction. The Ministry in collaboration with its sub-agencies, is ready to actively engage in the process. We have close cooperation with our Armenian and Azerbaijani colleagues in various directions, and new projects will further strengthen our partnership,” Mrs. Nino Tandilashvili stated.

The “USAID South Caucasus Regional Water Management Programme” will be implemented in 2023-2028, with a budget of USD 20 million. The program aims to promote water management in the South Caucasus region by involving stakeholders and fostering effective cross-border cooperation. Moreover, the program will help to establish common priorities in environmental protection and water resources management fields and strengthen regional cooperation.

The “USAID South Caucasus Regional Tourism Program” will be implemented in 2023-2026 to promote long-term regional cooperation in the tourism sector through common economic interests.

USD Six million will be spent on initiatives that will bring together the private sector, civil society, and Government Agencies in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to support the development of the tourism sector. The mentioned program will help to increase the flow of tourists in the region, increase the income of local businesses, and create new jobs.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has had a long-standing strategic partnership and cooperation with the relevant structures of the United States of America. From 2008 till now, the United States provided around USD 200 million in financial support for completed and ongoing projects.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21536>

Georgian outstanding students receive “Green” and “Agro” scholarships



“We need to promote environmental and agricultural professions, and we actively cooperate with the Ministry of Education on these issues. Today, we awarded 64 students from various higher and vocational schools with “Green” and “Agrarian” Scholarships, providing an incentive for young people to get interested in these professions in the future.

Meanwhile, we offer students internships at the Ministry and its subordinate agencies with the possibility of future employment. This is required to address the current scarcity of diverse specializations in both directions”, said the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Otar Shamugia, during the event.

Eight Universities in Georgia awarded 1500 GEL scholarships to 32 students from the environmental departments. Students can apply for scholarships to the following Master’s degree programs: Physical Geography and Sustainable Development of the Environment, Integrated

Water Resources Management (Hydrology), Geology, Ecology, Constructive (Applied) Geography and Environmental Protection, Environmental Management and Policy, Earth Sciences, Nature Conservation and Forestry, Environmental Protection technologies.

“Today’s students will guide Georgia’s European integration and sustainable development. The investment in their education contributes to the future of Georgia,” said Mrs. Anna Chernyshova, Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program in Georgia.

The “Green and Agro Scholarships” program implemented by the Environmental Information and Education Center of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture will promote the environmental and agricultural deficient professions and encourage excellent students. Within the program, students will have an opportunity to gain practical experience in relevant agencies.

Mrs. Maia Bitadze, Chair of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Mrs. Solomon Pavliashvili and Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputies of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Mr. Nodar Papukashvili, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, Mrs. Khatuna Zaldastanishvili, Head of Environmental Programs of the Swedish Embassy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Program Officer, Mrs. Lela Mamrikishvili, Director of Environmental Information and Education Center, Mrs. Tamar Aladashvili, Director General at Skills Agency of Georgia, Mrs. Tamar Kitiashvili and representatives of universities and colleges attended the event.

The “Green Scholarships” program is implemented by the Environmental Information and Education Center of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, within the framework of the large-scale initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) “Reducing the risk of disasters caused by climate change in Georgia”, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and with the support of the Governments of Georgia, Sweden, and Switzerland.

The Environmental Information and Education Center of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture is implementing the “Agro scholarships” program within the framework of the “Modernization of the Vocational Education System in Georgian Agriculture VET (Phase 3)” project of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21539>

Otar Shamugia meets the Regional Director of IFAD



The Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Otar Shamugia, met with the Regional Director of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Mr. Liam Chicca.

During the meeting, the parties discussed current projects and directions for future cooperation.

“We are linked by a long-standing and successful cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development. I sincerely appreciate your support and the positive results achieved through our joint work. Georgia is actively implementing reforms in many areas. Positive results are already visible nevertheless, there are still challenges to overcome in specific sectors, especially pasture management, in which our partners’ assistance will be crucial. I believe that activating a partnership with IFAD and effective cooperation will lead to even greater outcomes in the future”, said Mr. Otar Shamugia.

According to the regional director of IFAD, Mr. Liam Chicca, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will actively continue to support Georgia in the future and close cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Mr. Tengiz Nasaridze, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and the representatives of the International Fund for Agricultural Development attended the meeting.

<https://mepa.gov.ge/En/News/Details/21540>



GREEN CLIMATE FUND



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development

ENABLING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GEORGIA'S FOREST SECTOR REFORM - ECO.Georgia



ISSUE#10 / December 2023

“What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.” - Mahatma Gandhi

PROJECT BRIEF

The project “Enabling the implementation of Georgia’s forest sector reform - ECO.Georgia” is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture together with the National Forestry Agency, Rural Development Agency, Environmental Information and Education Centre, Department of Environmental Supervision; by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The project aims to mitigate GHG emissions through the nature-based management of the country’s forests and the improvement of energy efficiency to reduce the demand for fuelwood. It also envisages the strengthening of local self-governance and diversifying livelihood opportunities in the forest adjoining rural communities to benefit from diversified income opportunities through improved forestry value chains and better access to forestry knowledge and skills. The project focuses on three target regions (Guria, Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti) and eight municipalities: Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Lanchkhuti, Telavi, Kvareli, Akhmeta, Dedoplistskaro and Tianeti. The Project is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Government of Georgia (GoG) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



Component 1: Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)

Activity 1.1:
Development and implementation of SFM plans

Activity 1.2:
Strengthening of forest supervision

Activity 1.3:
Provision of sustainably produced fuelwood by NFA

Activity 1.4: Enhancement of enabling environment for the nation-wide implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM)

Activity 1.5: Improvement of monitoring and measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems for the forest sector



Component 2: Market Development for Energy Efficiency (EE) and Alternative Fuels (AF)

Activity 2.1: EE-AF supply chain development

Activity 2.2: Implementing consumer financing instruments for EE-AF solutions

Activity 2.3: Creating consumer awareness and provision of technical advisory services for fuelwood users

Activity 2.4: Enabling policies and regulations



Component 3: Livelihood opportunities and local self-governance in forest management

Activity 3.1:
Development and introduction of municipal-level tools, practices, plans and necessary capacities for participatory SFM and conservation

Activity 3.2:
Development, testing and promotion of mechanisms at the local level to better protect interests of adversely affected stakeholders

Activity 3.3:
Development of professional skills and knowledge relevant to SFM and conservation through vocational education and international partnerships with centers of knowledge

Activity 3.4:
Strengthening of selected value chains (e.g., timber, NTFP, parts of eco-tourism)

■ Activity in 3 target regions only

■ Nation-wide activity

□ Nation-wide activity with focus on 3 target regions

Easy access to the data of the National Forest Inventory of Georgia



Screenshot of the platform

The findings of the National Forest Inventory (NFI) are now accessible in various formats. The data acquired through the NFI study is the property of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA). Retrieving information from MEPA involves official correspondence between the Ministry and the interested parties. To streamline this process and facilitate access to data and information, an interactive platform has been developed. This platform empowers users to modify variables and recalculate data based on their specific interests.

This user-friendly platform has been developed within the ECO.Georgia project and has been integrated into the Ministry's website. <https://mepa.gov.ge/En/Page/NFI/>. It is available to the public free of charge, ensuring accessibility and convenience for every interested user. The platform is available in Georgian and English languages.

Closing ceremony of Forestry School



©EIEC: Field-practice for Forestry School students

The closing ceremony for the Forestry School, organized by the Environmental Information and Education Centre of the Ministry, took place on December 17. This school is a part of the awareness-raising initiatives under the ECO.Georgia project, designed to cultivate interest in forestry among the younger generation while imparting fundamental knowledge about nature protection and forestry practices.

A total of 36 school students actively participated in a three-month-long intensive program, which encompassed both theoretical and practical aspects. The curriculum included modules



© EIEC: Forestry School closing ceremony

about the role of forests in achieving the SDGs, sustainable forest management principles, forest types, timber and non-timber forest resources, eco-tourism, climate change and its impact on forests, forest fires, forest inventories, energy-efficiency and alternative fuels, protected areas, etc.

During the ceremony, Deputy Minister Solomon Pavliashvili, along with Tamar Aladashvili, Head of the EIEC, and Lutz Jarczynski, the Director of the ECO.Georgia project, engaged with the program participants. They gained insights into the students' experiences with the program and contributed to the award ceremony.

Akhmeta Forest Management Plan was discussed at the public hearing



© CENN:At the public hearing of Akhmeta FMP

A public hearing on the Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Akhmeta forest district took place at the Akhmeta Municipality Culture Centre on December 11. The Biodiversity and Forestry Department of MEPA facilitated the meeting, emphasizing the significance of the new forest management plans and ongoing processes within the forest sector reform.

The National Forestry Agency presented the activities outlined in the new FMP. Meeting participants discussed and provided their opinions on the completed and planned activities, addressing challenges in the field. These discussions will be incorporated into the final version of the plan, which will then be submitted to the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia for approval.

Representatives from the local population, local self-governance, environmental groups, environmental NGOs and other stakeholders, including representatives from GIZ and the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency, participated in the meeting. This public hearing was supported by the Swiss government through the ECO.Georgia project as part of the measures of a new participatory approach in the forest management processes.